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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 8 May 1992, at noon

President: Mr. BREITENSTEIN (Finland)

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The meeting was called to order at 12.05 p.m.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATOR FOR 1991 AND PRIORITY AREAS IDENTIFIED THEREIN (HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT) (agenda item 2) (DP/1992/12 and Add.1, 2, 4, 5 and 6)

1. Mr. DRAPER (Administrator, United Nations Development Programme) said that the end of the cold war had removed the major obstacle to the effective functioning of the United Nations system. Increasingly there was a vision of the United Nations as an instrument not only for peace but also for a new form of global security centred around people. It was therefore worrisome that, of late, voices had been heard calling for the United Nations to concentrate on peace-keeping and humanitarian aid, while at the same time it had been implied that economic and social development should be left to multilateral financing institutions and bilateral aid programmes. The United Nations, however, could not abdicate its role in development because it brought to that arena a neutral perspective and a multi-sectoral capacity which were indispensable. Concern had sometimes been voiced by donors that their control over the management of the United Nations bodies was less than that over the bilateral funds and development banks. However, the very voluntary nature of the funding of those United Nations organizations ensured on the contrary that the donors would be heard. Furthermore, the strong participation of recipient countries in governing bodies guaranteed a commitment and a sense of ownership that enhanced the effectiveness of the donors' contributions. The main thrust of General Assembly resolution 44/211, which defined the new guidelines for the operational development activities of the United Nations system, was to favour the control by countries of their development.

2. The results of 30 years of international cooperation for development were extremely positive and international aid had radically changed the future of mankind. In order to be able to continue to take up the challenges of development, the United Nations system needed more resources but it also needed to be reformed. On that subject, various proposals had been put forward to enhance the operational activities of the United Nations system, such as the Nordic United Nations project and the Secretary-General's study, which would be submitted to the Economic and Social Council. But perhaps those initiatives would not go far enough because for a long time the coordination of the different elements of the system had proved difficult. He therefore proposed five ideas for improving the United Nations development system that were realistic and feasible even in the short term.

3. First of all, at the field level, there should be a single United Nations office in each country, under the authority of a single Resident Coordinator. He would be appointed by the Secretary-General and report directly to him and would be responsible for pulling together all the threads of development. Individual programmes and funds such as UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP, as well as the operational activities of the new Department of Economic and Social Development (DESD), would all be part of that new structure; perhaps UNHCR and United Nations humanitarian activities should also be included. As requested by the Secretary-General, the information functions currently carried out by the Department of Public Information would be incorporated into the country office and, ideally, the specialized agencies should also be included. The Resident Coordinator and his or her team would, together with the Government

in question, design a single, coherent and integrated country programme, which would place the United Nations at the centre of capacity-building within the national development strategy.

4. Secondly, that restructuring at the field level would be accompanied by four areas of transformation at headquarters level: maximum possible decentralization to the unified field office from the headquarters of each of the organizations, because programme coordination was only really possible at the field level; tightly coordinated management of policies and operations among the various organizations at headquarters level, each one being responsible for its particular field of competence; each of the respective headquarters should give the highest priority to supporting and servicing the field office; finally, the individual roles and mandates should be clearly spelled out in order to avoid duplication.

5. Thirdly, with regard to the administration of the system, a single high-level body, which the Nordic project called an International Development Council, should be responsible for the operational and humanitarian activities of the United Nations. That body, which could be universal or of more limited membership, would meet once a year for a few days. Other organizations such as Habitat, UNEP, UNCTAD and the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/GATT and, in the longer term, the specialized agencies could also be brought under that governing body. All of those entities would receive operational guidance from separate executive boards, which themselves would report to the high-level governing body. Each of the executive boards would be composed of 15 to 20 members and would meet for one or two days on a monthly or bi-monthly basis; it would have the particular competence of each body represented and would be appointed for three years, for example. It would of course review budgetary and financial matters.

6. In the fourth place, in order to promote the team spirit indispensable to the enterprise as defined, the United Nations should develop a more coherent personnel policy, encouraging the recruitment of women, and promoting mobility between Headquarters and the field as well as between the various funds and programmes. The use of national professionals should also be increased.

7. Fifthly and finally, the modernized system should have predictable and multi-year resource flows, based on a combination of assessed, negotiated and voluntary contributions. Most importantly, a significantly larger share of the total resources available for international development assistance should be channelled through the United Nations.

8. Regarding UNDP itself, and its place within the United Nations system as a whole, its mandate was to build national capacity for human development and to coordinate efforts in that area. UNDP had recently moved towards a programme approach as well as national execution, which were two ways of giving the countries themselves greater responsibility and enabling them to be in control of the programmes. That methodological transition was difficult, but it was working. The new arrangements for support costs would permit the acquisition of goods and services from the most appropriate and cost-effective sources. UNDP for its part would remain accountable, through review and evaluation, for the quality of the inputs it provided, and would in no way abdicate that responsibility. UNDP's move upstream towards policy

dialogue and programme formulation underlined the key role which UNDP country offices would increasingly play. The recent worldwide move towards democracy and economic liberalization reinforced UNDP's capacity-building role in both policy formulation and programme implementation. UNDP was already providing critical technical assistance in support of the democratization process in a number of countries, such as Albania, Angola, Cambodia, Ghana and Mongolia. It was preparing to take direct action in South Africa and help to build the national capacity to manage the transformation to a more equitable society. The Secretary-General had requested UNDP to organize a donor conference and it was currently in the process of establishing a special trust fund for South Africa.

9. The principle of universality required that UNDP should respond to requests for assistance from any new developing country, whether it was in the North, South, East or West. At the current session, he was asking the Council not to change the focus of UNDP or to divert resources from the poorer developing countries and to continue to give special assistance to the LDCs. He appealed to it to offer the young countries of the former Soviet Union their legitimate right to benefit from the capacity of UNDP in the same way as all the developing countries.

10. UNDP would continue to intervene in Africa where the recent political and economic developments gave cause for optimism but where formidable problems still persisted and were aggravated by the drought in the southern and eastern regions. Africa should also be assisted in alleviating the short-term repercussions of structural adjustment. Furthermore, UNDP was becoming increasingly involved in the protection of the environment and planned to play a key role in the activities to follow up the decisions that would be taken by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. It also intended to intensify the struggle against the social and economic implications of the AIDS pandemic and minimize its effects on development. The United Nations system should offer a unified response based on the WHO/UNDP alliance against AIDS formed a few years previously and built on the comparative advantage of each organization.

11. In conclusion, he thanked the developed as well as the developing countries for their unfailing commitment and support. He wished in particular to thank Sweden which, in 1992, had increased its contribution by 11 per cent, thus becoming the largest single donor to UNDP. Norway, for its part, was once again the country which had made the highest per capita contribution.

OTHER FUNDS AND PROGRAMMES (agenda item 9) (continued)

United Nations Volunteers programme (continued) (DP/1992/37 and Add.1)

12. Mr. AFANASIEV (Russian Federation) noted that his country had only recently begun participating actively in the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme. As the successor of the USSR in the international organizations, Russia was assuming all the rights and obligations of the former Soviet Union, including its financial obligations to the programme. A new agreement would be signed to render official the relations between the programme and Russia. Since its establishment, the Russian Government had taken an inventory of all the requests made to it, and 26 Russian volunteers were already in Cambodia,

working in the areas of higher education and stabilization of political institutions. The Russian Government was determined to continue that cooperation.

13. Ms. McSWEENEY (Executive Coordinator, United Nations Volunteers Programme) noted that delegations agreed with the main focuses of the future action of the programme and welcomed the emphasis placed on the LDCs, the ability to adapt to the specific needs of each country and the complementarity with the entire mechanism of development aid and humanitarian assistance of the United Nations system. Delegations had called for a greater effort to be made in a number of areas, which would be done, and had come up with new ideas which, she was sure, would improve the comparative advantages and the "added value" of the volunteers.

14. The Administrator's proposal concerning the Special Voluntary Fund offered the programme and its partners opportunities to make bolder use of the fund, primarily to finance innovative development initiatives and for the guidance and information of the volunteers and the special recruitment campaigns. Many countries, both recipients and donors, had reaffirmed the relevance and usefulness of the Domestic Development Service, but strengthening or even just maintaining those activities would have financial implications. The programme would continue together with UNDP, to seek a solution which would, as delegations wished, give those activities financial security.

15. The 160 volunteers who were currently engaged in humanitarian assistance were all working with United Nations organizations, primarily UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. The question of the financing of those activities and of the mechanisms to be established for that purpose should therefore be placed again within the context of the entire system, for example, by intensifying the current discussions with the Humanitarian Affairs Department of the United Nations, taking into account the outcome of the future debate of the Governing Council on humanitarian assistance. The sustained efforts made to rationalize the administration of the programme would be presented to the Governing Council in 1993, within the framework of the submission of UNDP's administrative budget.

16. The PRESIDENT declared the general debate on the item closed and suggested that the Drafting Group should begin work on a draft decision.

17. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.